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BLR103148.E

Belarus: Reports of organized crime networks providing fraudulent documents to individuals seeking to leave the country

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In November 2008, the First TV Channel, a Belarusian state-owned broadcaster, reported that Belarusian authorities had arrested four people from Arab countries involved in a criminal group that transported people across the border (18 Nov. 2008). The group had demanded money for their services from five Lebanese and one Iraqi in exchange for providing them with fraudulent documents and transportation abroad; the group had housed the six people in Belarus and reportedly intended to transport them further west (First TV Channel 18 Nov. 2008).

In 2009, it was reported that Belarusian authorities, in conjunction with law enforcement agencies in Russia, Ukraine and Israel, had conducted an operation in early March 2009 to break a network that had been operating in the Eurasian region since 1998 and that trafficked women for sexual exploitation to Israel, Italy and Germany (Belepan 9 Mar. 2009). The traffickers' organizers were based in Moscow; they hired people to traffic abroad women from Belarus and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) who were then "enslaved" while attempting to procure employment in bars abroad (ibid.). The members of the "criminal ring" promised the women work, "arranged" their documents to go abroad and paid transportation costs (ibid.). The Belarusian Interior Ministry's main directorate for combating organized crime arrested an organizer of the criminal association responsible for the trafficking, and ten Belarusian victims were identified, including underage girls (ibid.).

No additional reports of organized crime networks providing fraudulent documents to individuals seeking to leave Belarus could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Belepan News Agency [Minsk, in Russian]. 9 March 2009. "Belarusian, Foreign Law Enforcers Block Human Trafficking Channel." (BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics/Factiva)

First TV Channel (Belarus) [Minsk, in Russian]. 18 November 2008. "Illegal Migration Ring Busted in Belarus." (BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics 19 Nov. 2008/Factiva)

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Minsk and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI) in Helsinki did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sources, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Centre for Information and Research on Organised Crime (CIROC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group, International Organization for Migration (IOM), INTERPOL, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Transcrime, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC), Transparency International.

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